



CHAPTER **3**

PART 4 AVIATION SUPPORT

INTRODUCTION

A key factor of the Marine Corps' ability to implement the new maritime strategy is the flexibility and combat power of Marine Aviation. Fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft organic to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force can shape and fight the battle, often in direct support of Individual Marines on the ground. Throughout the Marine Corps' history, this combined-arms team has proven unequalled across the spectrum of operations, from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to delivering ordnance on target during crisis and conflict. Today, our priority is to replace legacy aircraft—some of which that have been flying since the Vietnam War. Introducing vastly more capable aircraft with highly trained and experienced Individual Marine Aviators and support personnel will ensure that the Corps maintains its warfighting advantage for our Nation in the years to come.

Marine Aviation continues to operate in a complex operational environment around the globe. Regardless of the multifaceted and dynamic threats we face, our mission remains unchanged—to be the MAGTF's aviation force in readiness. Our challenge during this time is to remain engaged operationally while executing our transition strategy to posture the force for the future. The Marine Aviation Transition Strategy is a phased, multi-year plan incorporating force structure changes to better balance the Active Duty and Reserve Component capacity while simultaneously providing critical Marine

manpower increases to all flying squadrons and selected sections of the Marine Aircraft Group and Marine Aircraft Wing headquarters. Critical to this effort are the numerous transition task forces that are planning our transition from 13 types of legacy aircraft to seven new platforms. The complexities of our modernization plans become clearer upon review of our major programs. Our transition strategy can be separated into two mutually supportive efforts – sustain our legacy fleet and transition to new aircraft. Sustaining the legacy fleet includes upgrading the command and control systems as well as our Aviation Ground Support systems.

The following programs are the backbone of the ACE and lay the foundation for improved capabilities provided to us by our new aircraft and upgraded systems:

Aviation Combat Element (ACE) Legacy Aircraft Modernization

Aviation Ground Support

Theater Battle Management Core System

The Joint Interface Control Office Support System

Higher deployment tempo and corresponding increased difficulty in maintaining over used legacy systems demand that we transition to our new aircraft and systems on schedule. Our roadmap for navigating through this challenge is contained in the overarching Transition Strategy detailed in the Marine Aviation Plan. Our transition strategy as outlined in the AvPlan has become a keystone 'liv-

ing' document that outlines the multi-year transition plan and provides a ready reference for the fleet as well as the other services to understand the complexities and ultimate goals of our transition strategy. The collaborative efforts of Marine forces, HQMC, NAVAIR, and industry are largely responsible for the impressive achievements of many of our major programs over the past year.

- MV-22 Osprey Program
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)
- KC-130J Super Hercules
- H-1 Upgrade Program (UH-1Y Huey / AH-1Z Cobra)
- Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Transition Plan
- F-35B Short Take-Off Vertical Landing (STOVL) Joint Strike Fighter (JSF)
- CH-53K Heavy Lift Helicopter
- Operational Support Aircraft (OSA)